

A legislative update from  
**STATE REP. ANITA SOMANI**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 11



@AnitaSomaniMD (614) 466-5358  
@RepAnitaSomaniMD rep11@ohiohouse.gov  
@OHHouseDems

Dear Neighbor,

Happy May! May is both the month of Mother's Day and Mental Health Awareness, so it was the perfect time to introduce HCR 16, a resolution to recognize the importance of perinatal mental health. My joint sponsor, Representative Sharon Ray, and I both believe that perinatal mental health education and awareness is incredibly important for the well-being of mothers and babies across the state of Ohio.

The perinatal period begins at the start of pregnancy and ends at the child's first birthday. It is a time of rapid change, and also can pose the risk of developing mental health conditions. While it is normal to experience about two weeks of anxiety or depression after having a baby, if symptoms of depression and anxiety persist, please reach out to your physician for help. While our society is progressing in its acceptance of mental health conditions, perinatal mental health issues are still highly stigmatized as our society puts so much pressure on mothers. It's important to know that it is not only okay, but highly encouraged to reach out for professional help to address these issues.

Perinatal mental health conditions are common, and yet extremely underdiagnosed as almost 75% of cases are untreated. As a society we need to do better both from the standpoint of supporting families during that first year and personally by checking in with your friends and family. As legislators, we must focus on passing bills for increased family leave, expanding child care access, and increased funding for child care facilities, all of which can help alleviate stress from new parents. This resolution is just the beginning for what we can do to support Ohio mothers and children.

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions on legislation or concerns that you may have. I love to hear from you all!

Sincerely,

*Anita Somani*  
**Anita Somani M.D.**  
State Representative



I want to extend my congratulations to all of the Hilliard and Dublin City school seniors graduating at the end of the month! Wishing you the best in your future endeavors.



The week of May 6th - May 10th was both teacher and nurses appreciation week. Both professions are incredibly important for a creating a happy, healthy, and well-educated society. If you know a teacher or nurse, please thank them for all the work they do!



**Reproductive Rights Legislative Roundup: The Good and The Bad**

**The Good**

Last week marked the deadline for filing legislation that will be guaranteed at least one hearing during this General Assembly. In that spirit, I would like to highlight the various bills that I have offered recently to protect reproductive rights in Ohio.

My main legislative focuses are **HB 343**, **HB 505**, and **HB 565**, all of which address different issues concerning reproductive rights.

In March, Rep. Liston and I filed **HB 343**, the Reproductive Care Act. This legislation aims to repeal a variety of archaic laws, like mandatory waiting periods and hospital transfer agreements, on the books in Ohio that restrict reproductive healthcare access. It will also add protections related to patients and providers including data privacy, nondiscrimination, and civil and criminal protections for evidence-based care. Encouraging medically accurate and evidence-based care for patients in Ohio is crucial for the protection of reproductive rights.

In April, alongside Rep. Brown-Picolantonio, I introduced **HB 505** to protect the right to assisted reproductive technology, such as IVF. The right to reproductive care means the protection of interventions such as IVF.

Finally, in May, Rep. Grim and I introduced **HB 565** to establish rules that crisis pregnancy centers must follow in order to receive state funding. Crisis pregnancy centers currently receive money from the state of Ohio under the guise of providing care to those in need of pregnancy resources. However, these centers often give out medically inaccurate information, and are not truthful about all of the reproductive options available to patients. If we are funding these centers with taxpayer dollars, these centers must offer medical services, like pap smears and ultrasounds, and only disseminate medically accurate information.

**The Bad**

Ohioans made their feelings about the right to reproductive care quite clear with the passage of Issue 1 in November. However, this does not mean that the fight is over. Some of my colleagues at the Statehouse have unfortunately introduced legislation to restrict the right to care. Rep. Williams has introduced **HB 475** to withhold state funding from any organization that provides or promotes abortion care. It also would withhold state funding from local governments that provide funding to abortion care access.

**SB 159** is legislation that would allow Ohioans to receive a tax credit for donations to crisis pregnancy centers. In order to qualify for the credit, the center that receives the donation cannot promote or perform abortion. This bill encourages Ohioans to give money to organizations that do not provide comprehensive care, and instead often disseminate medically inaccurate information. It is simply a bill looking to completely undermine the citizen led constitutional amendment to protect reproductive rights.

**Ballot Blues**

**What is the issue?**

Due to Ohio state law, candidates must be certified by their party at least 90 days before the election. The DNC won't take place until 78 days before the election. This scenario has occurred multiple times on both sides and most recently happened in 2020. Now, Republicans are using this to further their agenda by adding anti-ballot initiative language to the bill to add Biden to the ballot.

Last year, citizens passed reproductive rights and stopped the threshold of 60% happening for citizen led initiatives. Rather than accept the will of the people they are trying again to stop a citizen led ballot initiative from passing.

There are 2 Bills pending which will cement the power of a small minority. Here are only a few ways:

1. People who participate in citizen led initiatives would have to disclose their personal information. Want to sign a petition? Your information would become public record.
2. Your finances would become open to scrutiny and you could face a fine if at ANY time someone from a different country (even a family member) gave you or your business money.
3. The ability to investigate suspicions of any wrongdoing in campaigns would be taken away from local officials and given to a highly politicized office that could investigate anyone they want.

We cannot let extremist republicans use the presidential election as a bargaining chip to take away your ability to get the things you care about on the voting ballot.

**What can you do?**

**Contact House Speaker Jason Stephens'** office and tell him you only support a "clean" ballot fix bill.  
**Phone:** 614-466-1366  
**Email:** rep93@ohiohouse.gov

**Contact Governor DeWine's** office and ask him to rescind his support for the Senate version of the bill.  
**Phone:** 614-466-3555  
**Email:** <https://governor.ohio.gov/contact>

**Contact your State Senator's** office to tell them you only support a clean bill and to vote no on any bill with a ballot initiative poison pill. You can find your State Senator [here](#).

**In the News**



I spoke with Jenna Jordan at Spectrum News about how fibroids affect women's health. Thanks to Congresswoman Brown's new U-FIGHT Act, more attention is being brought to this issue. You can read more through this [link](#).



In honor of Women's health awareness Month, Dr. Halaharvi invited me on The Breast Cancer Podcast, to discuss the importance of early screening and education. You can listen to the podcast [here](#).

**Out and About**



Representative Ray and I presented our resolution to increase perinatal mental health awareness in front of the House Behavioral Health Committee on May 7th.



I got to meet with 2 high school juniors participating in Mosaic, a program for high-schoolers to partner with local non-profits to complete capstone research projects. We discussed their thoughts on education funding in Ohio!



I met with 4th graders from Norwich Elementary school before their tour of the Statehouse. I loved the chance to answer their questions about being a State Rep, and also what they wanted to be when they grew up!



Leader Russo and I presented a commendation to the Ohio Nurses Association in honor of Nurses Appreciation Week.



I attended the Harmony Project's concert for Humankind. A night honoring a wonderful organization creating community through music.